ISSUES OF IDENTITY CRISIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECT DALIT AND AFRICAN AMERICAN POETS

Research Proposal Submitted to Swami Ramanand Teerth

Marathwada University, Nanded - 431606,

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Research Student,

DHAMMADEEP CHANDIDAS SAWANT

M.A. Eng & PSY, MSW, M.Ed, SET (Edu)

Research Supervisor,

DR. SHAIKH MAHEMUD ABDUL RAHEMAN

Assistant Professor, Department of English,

Shree Shivaji College Parbhani

RESEARCH CENTER,

Department of English, Peoples College, Nanded

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I) INTRODUCTION:

India is a multi - cultural, multi – Lingual and multi–religious country. Various religions and cultures live together in the country. The people of it speak different languages. Therefore, diversity is a major feature of the country. Due to the diversity in religions and languages, there is a crisis in living life altogether. It's possible to live a life together in this diverse atmosphere. But some dominants want their dominance over the others and from that; a crisis is creating in the country. Caste is the major factor in these crisis High castes people have been exploiting low castes people for thousands of years. Those low castes people are generally called downtrodden, shudra, or Dalits. Dalits have been living in slavery, hegemony, and injustices created by the dominant castes. 'Suppression was the usual thing for them. They have been denied all the rights by the dominants.

In modern times, some social thinkers or the reformers such as; Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, have strongly opposed caste discrimination and demanded liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar became the lighting path for the Dalits because; through the constitution, he has given protection to every common man in the country. Due to this social change, the Dalits of the country have become conscious of their rights and therefore, they became ready to fight against any injustice made by the dominants. They have chosen literature as the weapon for fighting against discrimination.

Dalit literature is the literature produced by Dalit writers with Dalit consciousness. It means two things have decided the literature as Dalit literature; the ***first one is the birth of the writer and the second one is the consciousness.*** Human freedom is the major inspiration behind Dalit literature which they got from thinking of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dalit writers wanted to create rebellion literature for fighting against the humiliation and suppression suffered by them in the past and even at present in the 'Chaturvarna' system.

Various writers have been trying to give define the Dalit literature which are showing the details of the origin, scope, goal, and inspiration of Dalit literature. We

have to see one of them for our better understanding. It's given by Baburao Bagul; According to him, "Which gives honor to human freeness, which thinks the human is great, which greatly opposed to caste, class, creed, this kind of literature is called Dalit literature." Thus, in short, we could say that Dalit literature is the literature of all downtrodden which demanding on equal treatment for all human beings.

In Dalit literature, poems and autobiographies play a very vital role Dalit literature became popular firstly in the Marathi language in Maharashtra then it is translated into various Indian languages. The English translation has given a great space in world literature. Marathi Dalit literature and its translation have influenced various Dalit writers from all over Indian country. Tamil Dalit writing is one of them. Various Dalit writers are writing their pieces of literature in Tamil language and it's also been translated into English. Which is infusing on the world literature? The present research has selected two poets from Tamil Dalit writing. Which are **N.D. Rajkumar and Meena Kandasamy.** Their poetry writing is very influential in Dalit literature.

N.D. Rajkumar belongs to the land of Periyar (one of the most popular critics of the Hindu religion and social reformer in South India). Rajkumar has a distinct poetic voice and wanted to show the story of his ancestor's oppressors, and *how they wanted to erase the existence of living Dalits from history.* His style is different than others which matched folk artists. His poetry creates questions about Brahminical culture and its hegemony through his metaphors and images. His most popular poem collection is ***"Give us this day a feast of flesh".*** His poems have been translated by Anushiya Ramaswami from Tamil to English.

Meena Kandasamy is the very youngest (born in 1984) dalit poet from Chennai Tamilnadu. She is also a fiction writer, translator, and activist she published ***'Touch' (2006) and Ms. Miltancy (2010).*** Her poetic voice made her a feminist writer who wanted to raise the voice of those women, who have not got any rights, and no one is ready to raise them.

America is also a multi–cultural country like India. There are living peoples who belong to different ethnicities, races, and countries. Race and Ethnicity are the major forces in America generally; we called it U.S.A. African Americans are the major racial minority group that has lived in slavery imposed by the white Americans origin in African countries. They bought first in the seventeenth century from Africa to America.

They were acquired by the white Americans as slaves for working in the firms. From that, they had been exploited physically, mentally, and sexually by the whites. They had lived as animals for hundreds of years. Even they could not live with their own family. If another owner purchased them, they had to go with that person by living up to his family members. Therefore, they may have been married twice or thrice. They were denied all rights by the white just working for the owners were the only living purpose of the slaves.

But since the nineteenth century, they have been trying to protest against the humiliation and injustices. Literature and music were the major instruments they selected for the protest. Soon their literature became popular as a medium of bringing their questions or traumas in front of the world. Through literature, they wanted to erase their old identities as a slave and wanted to establish new social–cultural identities literature helped them for changing their place in American society the aim of their literature is also human freedom like Dalit literature in India.

Harlem Renaissance, Black Panther Party, and Black Arts Movement played an important role in their development of life. They produced potential literature that influenced the world, "Black Panther Party" and 'Black literature' also influenced 'Dalits' respectively. Some so potential writers have been writing their kinds of literature for their new identity. In America as well as the whole world here the researcher has selected two poets from all those renowned writers which are as; Langston Hudges and Alice Walker.

James Mercer Langston Hudges is an African American writer, well known as a leader of the 'Harlem Renaissance'. His work is well known to the literary world he

was one of the earliest innovators of the literary art form called **Jazz poetry**. He eventually graduated from Lincoln University and then started literary writing in Harlem. With poetry, he has written ***plays and short stories he was a representation of the African American common people gaining their identity.*** Due to his very influential writing, he had honored with various awards for example; in 1963. Howard University awarded him an honorary Doctorate, in 1964; Western Reserve University awarded him by lit. D., etc. therefore, his literature especially poetry became a useful medium for establishing their new identity.

Alice Malsenior Tallulah – Kate Walker is the Pulitzer Prize winner African American writer, poet, and social activist. She won the 'Pulitzer Prize' for her novel 'the color purple in 1982 and became the first African American woman writer who got such a prestigious award 'Once' is her first poetry book published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. She also published a scrapbook of poetry in name of ***"Poems of a Childhood Poetess"***. With this, she published a book of poems named ***'The World Will Fallow Joy Turning Madness into Flowers (New Poems).*** With the poetry she published her literary work contained double consciousness; as a black and as a woman she has faced various problems which she represented through her writing. All those pieces of her literary writing became helpful for establishing their new identity in the world.

- **Indian Dalit Poets** : N. D. Rajkumar and Meena Kandasamy
- **African Americans Poets** : Langston Hudges and Alice Walker

II) IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH:

There are various similarities between Dalit literature and African American literature 'Dalit Panther Party' has established on the ground of 'The Black Panther Party'. Both parties have been fighting for gaining justice for their people. That both kinds of literature' aim is to get freedom from slavery, imposed by the dominants.

Various researchers are selecting topics from these kinds of literature for their dissertations but fewer researchers are daring to make comparative research on those kinds of literature. Therefore, for searching their aims, which are similar that is

freedom of human beings, the researcher has selected four writers/poets; two from Dalit literature and two from African American literature. The researcher has a hope that the present research will become useful for other researchers, writers, and common people.

III) OBJECTIVES:

The objectives are like the path for the research therefore, the present research contained the following objectives'

1) To study the socio–cultural identity of Dalits in the Indian content.
2) To study the socio–cultural identity of African Americans in the American content.
3) To study similarities between Dalit and African American literature, especially from poetry.
4) To study the importance of both kinds of literature from human beings' points of view.

IV) HYPOTHESIS:

The present research will depend on the following hypothesis;

1) Dalits have been suppressed by the dominants for hundreds of years.
2) African Americans have been exploited by white Americans for hundreds of years.
3) Both kinds of literature aim to get human beings freedom.
4) Both kinds of literature are important for every human being.

V) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The analytical method will be used for the present research. Various poems by selected poets will be analyzed; primary as well as secondary data will be used.

All the poetry collections of selected poets will be used as the primary source of information as the other writings of the selected writers any other writings of Dalits

and African American writers and the comments from others. Dominant writers also will be used as a secondary source of information. Various writings such as; research papers, articles, journals, news, etc. on the Dalit and African American literature will also be used as secondary data.

VI) TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION:

The present research's tentative chapters will be as follows;

Chapter – I

Introduction

Chapter – II

The thematic study of selected Dalit poet's poetry

Chapter – III

The thematic study of the poems of selected African American poets

Chapter –IV

The comparative study of the selected Dalit and African American poets

Chapter – V

Conclusion

VII) CONCLUSION:

Dalit writing and African American literature both are important for every human being therefore, it's important to study them comparatively thus, the researcher has selected two poets from Dalit literature poetry; N.D. Rajkumar and Meena Kandasamy and two poets from African American poetry; Langston Hudges and Alice walker. The researcher has a hope that the comparative study of these two kinds of literature gives a new direction to the upcoming research in those fields.

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Research Student — Dhammadeep Sawant

Research Guide — Dr. Shaikh M. A.